privilege, post-retirement, etc. Besides, as per the extant policy, Complimentary Card/Cheque passes are issued to Ex-MR/MOS (R)/DMR, ex-MPs, Arjuna Awardees/Olympic Medalists, Gallantry Awardees (Defence), Gallantry Awardees (Police), Presidents/Secretaries of National Sports Federation of India and individuals and organisations at the discretion of Minister of Railways. The Class and the number of persons travelling on these passes are determined as per the specific orders of the competent authority. In the absence of mention of specific period no comments can be given regarding the number of 5500.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) and (e) Already covered in the reply to part (a) of the Question.

(f) No, Sir.

(g) Passes to the above categories are issued as per extant policy.

Ban on Recruitment in Department of Posts

6382. PROF. OMPAL SINGH NIDAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to impose a ban on new recruitments in Department of Posts;

(b) if so, the reason therefor;

(c) whether the Government have received representations from various Postal and Telecommunication organisations in this regard; and

(d) if so, the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Does not arise.

Activities of Touts

6383. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government have been drawn to the news-item captioned "clique that dupes rail passengers" appearing in the News Time date March 21,1997;

(b) if so, the facts thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to stop the activities of touts especially in regard to "RAC"?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Some unauthorised travel agencies are resorting to illegal business of purchase and selling of Railway reservation tickets in twin cities area in Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

(c) South Central Railway has formulated a special team of RPF and Ticket Checking Staff to visit different places and offices and apprehend touts and other unauthorised persons indulging in malpractices in reservations. Moreover, surprise checks are conducted regularly in Reservation/Booking Offices to check the persons indulging in such activities jointly by the Commercial and Vigilance Departments with the help of GRP/RPF and action is taken against them under the Railways Act. As a result of preventive checks conducted by the Zonal Railways during the year 1995 and 1996, 1532 and 1944 touts respectively were apprehended.

Maintenance of Rolling Stock

6384. SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have expressed concern over the poor maintenance of rolling stock like coaches, wagons, locomotives and tracks resulting in frequent derailments and disruption of rail traffic;

(b) if so, whether the Government have instructed Railways during the conference of controllers of zonal railways and production units to ensure all round maintenance between the desired level and carrying attitude; and

(c) if so, the extent to which railways have been able to improve the maintenance of rolling stock?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) Government has expressed concern regarding train accidents and consequent disruption of rail traffic. Accidents are caused due to sabotage, bomb blasts, terrorist activities, rash and careless driving of road vehicles at level crossings and maintenance/material failure of railway equipment.

(b) Safety in train operation is being accorded the highest priority by the Government and improvement in this direction is an ongoing process. This is an item which is regularly discussed with the General Managers of Zonal Railways and production units durings the General Manager's conferences.

(c) There has been a regular improvement in the maintenance of the rolling stock. Equipment failure on rolling stock during 1996-97 have been 10-15% less as compared to the failure during 1995-96.

Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd.

6385. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd. has been incurring losses;

(b) if so, the details thereof during each of the last three years, and present financial position of the Corporation;

(c) whether the Corporation spent Rs. 4 lakhs on advertising for 52 executives posts;